

Camp Baker (Fort Logan) Blockhouse
17 mi. northwest of White Sulphur Springs
White Sulphur Springs Vicinity
Meagher County
Montana

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

CAMP BAKER (FORT LOGAN) BLOCK HOUSE

Fort Logan, Meagher County, Montana

ADDRESS: 17 miles northwest of White Sulphur Springs

OWNER: Nancy Berg

OCCUPANT: none

USE: Historic Point of Interest

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Logan was established in 1869 to protect the freight route from Fort Benton to Helena and also to protect Diamond City, other nearby mining camps and the growing number of cattle ranches in the Smith River and upper Musselshell Valleys.

The unusual eight-sided two story log structure -- actually the square plan of the second floor is turned at a 45° angle to the first floor, thus giving fire power in eight directions -- is a reminder of the importance of military forts, temporary or permanent, in the settlement of the west.

Available troops from Camp Baker (which was later renamed Fort Logan), Fort Shaw and Fort Ellis were dispatched under the command of Colonel John Gibbon to join Generals Terry and Crook in the spring of 1876 in a move against the Sioux. These troops barely missed glory, arriving too late to aid General Custer in the Battle of the Little Big Horn on June 25, 1876. They got there in time to bury what was left of General Custer's command.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In the late 1860's the Territory of Montana was guarded by Fort Shaw to the north and Fort Ellis to the south, but the central portion was unguarded. The rich gold strikes in Confederate Gulch and Diamond City, the growing cattle industry plagued with Indian raids, and the necessity to protect the Fort Benton trade route were all factors in the demands of the people for protection.

In the winter of 1869, Camp Baker was established in the Smith River Valley as a one-company temporary adjunct of Fort Ellis. The following

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summer (1870) the post was moved ten miles up the Smith River towards White Sulphur Springs. Here the Smith River Valley was only three miles wide.

The fort was then under Captain George S. Hollister, Company G, 7th Infantry who commanded it until May 15, 1872, when Captain H. B. Freeman, Company A, 7th Infantry, took over. Freeman was succeeded by Lt. Colonel C. C. Gilbert in November, 1875. Gilbert was in command until 1878, when Major Guido Ilges, also of the 7th Infantry, became commander. In 1879, Major Ilges was replaced by Major A. L. Chapman, 3rd Infantry, the post's last commander.

Although the fort never experienced an attack in the decade of its existence, it furnished troops in both major Indian battles of the 1870's: the Battle of the Little Big Horn (June 25, 1875) and the Battle of the Big Hole (August 9, 1877). Soldiers from the fort also engaged in several skirmishes with renegade Indians in the valley. The post served as a business and social center for the area, as well as a military establishment.

On December 31, 1878, the name of Camp Baker was changed to Fort Logan in honor of Captain William Logan, killed in the Battle of the Big Hole. Fort Logan was abandoned in the fall of 1880, and the troops and effects were moved to Fort Maginnis, a new post on the Musselshell River.

The land and buildings were sold to Judge William Gaddis, the post sutler, for \$4,525.

On August 24, 1924, the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated the fort to posterity and placed a bronze plaque on the original blockhouse. The blockhouse was moved to what was once the center of the fort's parade ground in 1962 and set upon a concrete foundation and the building restored.

Although the property now belongs to Nancy Berg of White Sulphur Springs and Milwaukee, the building is open to the public.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

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- McElroy, Harold L., "Mercurial Military, A Study of the Central Montana Frontier Army Policy", Montana, the Magazine of Western History, vol. IV, no. 4, Fall, 1954.
- Montana, A State Guide Book, W.P.A. Writers' Project, Viking Press, New York, 1939.
- Twichell, Thomas E., A History of Fort Logan (Camp Baker) Montana, Thesis for Carroll College, Helena, Montana, 1957.
- Wolle, Muriel S., Montana Pay Dirt, Sage Books, Denver, 1963.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - 19'-4" x 19'-4", two story log building. The second floor is turned 45° from the first floor presenting an octagonal defense. The angle causes a projection on each side of the building of approximately 4'-10".

Foundation - concrete (from restoration).

Wall Construction - Logs approximately 12" in size, notched cornering, both round and rough-hewn square logs.

Openings - Entrances: two, both of rough-hewn planking. The major opening on the south facade is 4'-7" wide and 6'-0" in height. The other door faces eastward and is 3'-7" x 6'-0".

Windows: one opening on the first floor, 2'-4" x 2'-0" with a rough-hewn plank shutter. The second floor has a similar shuttered opening 3'-6" x 4'-3" facing north-northwest.

Others: V-shaped gun portals cut into the logs. They have an exterior opening of about 3" and an interior dimension of 9"± by 7"±. A wedge-shaped block closed the opening to the elements. There are fourteen such portals on the first floor and the same number on the second. Beneath the exterior openings metal straps 8 1/8" x 1 5/8" x 1/4" are nailed to the logs.

Roof - wood shingled, hipped roof having a central vented cupola. The pitch is approximately 18½°.

Chimney - none.

INTERIOR

Floor Plans - The first floor and the second floor each have a single square room, identical in size, with the upper floor turned to a 45° angle above the lower floor.

Stairway - Access to the second floor was gained through a trap door 2'-7" x 2'-10" and a vertical ladder.

Doors - none.

Trim - Rough planking.

Hardware - Hand-forged metal hooks and hinges; a few remain today.

GENERAL SETTING

The blockhouse stands in about the middle of the former parade grounds. The original fort property is now cut by a gravel highway. It sets in a fenced-in meadow about 135' north of the road to White Sulphur Springs.

Prepared by,

John N. DeHaas, Jr.
John N. DeHaas, Jr.
Architect

May 1967

Approved:

A. Lewis Koue

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Supervisory Architect

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